

# Engineering Case Study Knowles Electronics

File transfer problems.  
**Solved.**



**Chicago-based global leader in hearing aid and acoustic instruments, uses Accellion to send files securely around the world, resulting in end-to-end security, improved business productivity, and minimum IT management overhead.**

## Background

Knowles is a leading international manufacturer of technologically advanced products in the hearing aid and acoustic markets. Founded in 1946, Knowles has leveraged core competency in acoustic technology to build expertise in hearing aid transducers and low voltage integrated circuit design, electronic controls and sensors, and precision manufacturing. With customers in North America, Europe and Asia, Knowles has major operations located in the United States, China and Malaysia.

## Challenges

### Security

As a multinational technology and manufacturing company with proprietary technology and a competitive market, Knowles has particularly stringent standards for secure communication with its global offices and external users, whose security settings cannot be controlled. Knowles' finance and executive team is especially concerned with secure and auditable communications with its outside lawyers, auditors and Board of Directors in the age of Sarbanes Oxley. This is a concern given that the most common communication path, e-mail, is not encrypted, and has poor audit trails and is easy to intercept.

### Sending Large Files

Like most companies, Knowles has a 10MB attachment size limit to ensure that file transfer through email does not degrade the corporate

wide e-mail performance. However, as a manufacturing firm of precision electronic components, Knowles regularly sends design files to vendors, customers, and branch offices around the world. Because these files are often much larger than the 10MB e-mail limit, Knowles had adopted various conventional methodologies including CD delivery as a standard for large file transfers.

## Executive Team Needs

The need for secure file transfers was not limited to the sales, design, and production people. The executive team of Knowles is in constant communication with each other and board members around the world. Since most of the discussions are confidential in nature, without an easy and secure method of sending files electronically, information exchange takes place in the form of fax and overnight delivery. Instead of enduring the difficulty and inconvenience of these traditional solutions, Mr. Randyll (Randy) W. Kjell, Vice President and Chief Information Officer of Knowles, led the effort to find the right secure ad hoc file transfer solution.

**"Accellion allows me to address our security needs without hassle and lets me deploy my limited IT resources to other priorities. Accellion's solution provides a complete security loop for ad hoc file transfer to our offices, partners, and customers around the world. Today, the Accellion appliance has become an integral part of our processes with senior management regularly using the system to exchange confidential information."**

Randy Kjell,  
Vice President & Chief Information Officer  
Knowles

## Requirements

In terms of priority, Kjell wanted the new solution to fit four needs. First, it had to be highly secure. This was not just a function of having the latest encryption capability; in Kjell's mind this extended to the business processes of sending and receiving files. Kjell also wanted security and compliant business processes without having to require client software for external users. Second, the solution should help IT by tracking and managing the lifecycle of files and accounts automatically. Third, the new system should have minimal impact on the existing email infrastructure while lessening the burden on the e-mail servers by offloading the file transfer traffic from e-mail. Finally, the solution had to be easy to install and manage.

"We searched many months for a solution that would fit our needs and it took us a while before we found Accellion," said Kjell. "With our stringent requirements, many solutions proved to be unsatisfactory because they did not address the underlying business process needs. And, given that the existing business processes were not broken, I was looking for a solution that fit all of our needs without requiring us to change. We wanted a solution that had the secure functionality we wanted and at the same time was easy to use and maintain."

## Solution

Knowles found Accellion in an online search. After extensive discussions on Knowles' business processes, Kjell decided to get an Accellion Appliance with the optional email integration clients. Accellion's secure file transfer system is designed for secure ad hoc file transfer usage typical of business users.

Knowles' installation includes e-mail integration with the Microsoft Outlook clients so that users can click on the Accellion button to attach files just like they use the Outlook paper clip today.

Based on Knowles's selection criteria, Accellion hits all the marks. For security, in addition to the encrypted storage and transmission using industry standard protocols, Accellion allows users to integrate the secure ad hoc file transfer process into business process rather than asking users to log into a separate FTP account or send CDs.

For administration, the Accellion appliance comes with complete backend management tools and reports that allow the IT team to set life cycle policies for files so that they are automatically sunset without human intervention. Similarly, IT can set sunset policies on accounts to minimize concerns of external users getting access to information beyond the desired timeframe.

As an integrated tool into Microsoft Outlook™, Accellion allows users to use the system with almost no training. Finally, Knowles is particularly attracted to the appliance form-factor because, as a self-contained unit, it solves the secure ad hoc file transfer concern without requiring a team of dedicated IT resources for maintenance.

"The Accellion solution provides a complete security loop for ad hoc file transfer to our offices, partners, and customers around the world," said Kjell. "We were skeptical at first because we had seen many products that did not work as advertised. Today, the Accellion appliance has become an integral part of our processes with senior management regularly using the system to exchange confidential information."

In addition to the standard feature of return receipt for any file accessed, the Accellion Appliance can be configured so that only the original intended recipient can retrieve the file. Knowles uses this as an important method for protecting intellectual property and other trade secrets in the on-going communication with external partners.

A favorite feature with both users and IT is that the Accellion appliance allows external users to send back large files to Knowles internal users. Using the same infrastructure without requiring any additional client software or IT administration, external user can send large files to Knowles users with the same level of security.

Because Accellion secure file transfer is used as part of external facing processes, Knowles opted to get a customized UI to ensure a consistent experience for all external partners. These days, with a small "Powered by Accellion" logo on the web interface, Knowles offers this secure ad hoc file transfer capabilities as an integral part of its IT infrastructure. "Accellion secure file transfer allows me to address our security needs without hassle and lets me deploy my limited IT resources to other priorities," said Kjell."

## BENEFITS

- Business and technical security for file transfer processes
- Unclogged email servers – file attachments offloaded
- Reduced IT support for file transfer
- Ease of use for non-technical users

## Specifications

Knowles Electronics	
Deployed since	2004
# of Appliances	1
Location of Appliances	US
# of Users	7200 (estimated)
LDAP/AD directory integration	Yes
Web Interface	Customized
Email plug-in	MS Outlook